

GROUNDWATER BRANCH KENTUCKY DIVISION OF WATER

Operation And Maintenance Practices For Rock-Plant Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems

1. Follow the operation and maintenance practices for a conventional septic system. Do not allow the septic tank to fill with solids to the point that they flow over into the rock-plant filter bed. The solids can plug the distributor pipe and gravel, resulting in improper functioning of the filter bed. Check the depth of the solids in the tank after the first three to five years of operation. See page 6 of the Fall, 1995 issue of Pipeline: Pumping and Inspecting Your System—What to Expect, for information on pumping your tank.**
2. During extended vacations, long absences, or severe droughts maintain the water level at the flow line by allowing enough water to enter the system through the plumbing.
3. Avoid large increases in wastewater loading. Plants do not react well to a sudden influx of a large amount of water. For example, a top-loading washing machine uses an average of 40 gallons of water to wash a large load of clothes. Having several house guests for a week may produce hundreds of gallons of extra water requiring treatment. The rock-plant filter bed was not designed to treat all that extra water. It may cause the water to pond, as well as overtax the ability of the plants in the bed to cleanse the water.
4. Each spring remove all the dead vegetation (not the roots) from the rock-plant filter bed.
5. As needed, remove any weeds and grass that may be in the rock-filter bed. Mow grass and weeds growing around the filter bed.
6. Don't allow tree limbs to grow out over the filter bed and shade it unless the shaded area is planted with aquatic plants that require or tolerate shade.
7. After five to ten years the rock-plant filter bed may become root bound due to excessive Growth. If this occurs, remove some of the plants, including their roots.

**The Fall, 1995 issue of Pipeline may be obtained free on request by contacting Patricia Keefe at the Groundwater Branch, Kentucky Division of Water, 14 Reilly Road, Frankfort KY 40601; 502/564-6120.